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INEZ DE CASTRO

A POEM.



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Let it be noted that there are herein
several typographical errors, the
correction whereof (the Author not
wishing that trouble) is left to the
intelligent and discerning reader
§§§

Caroline Allen,
with the author's love
1847

2. 10. 1900

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INEZ DE CASTRO:

A POEM

IN THREE CANTOS.

BY

JOHN STORES SMITH.

Then let the stricken deer go weep,

The hart ungalled play:

For some must watch while others sleep,


Thus runs the world away.

HAMLET

Manchester:

PRINTED BY J. GALT & Co.

—
1847.



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TO
STEPHEN HENRY BRAYBROOKE, ESQUIRE,

THIS POEM IS INSCRIBED,

AS A TOKEN

OF THE DEEPEST ADMIRATION AND THE TRUEST FRIENDSHIP.

PROLOGUE.

TO CAROLINE.

IN olden time when minstrels sang;
They recked not of the world's applause ;
In honest warmth their wild notes rang
Unfettered by the critics' laws.
They wrote not for an empty name—
They wrote not for a passing fame—
Nor dared to prostitute the muse,
To base and mercenary views.
But only sang the truths God taught,
What time they roamed the realms of thought ;
And when the world arose with might
To crush them in unequal fight :
They cared not so a lady's eye,
Beamed kindly on their poesy.
Their flag, the loud-tongued mass above,
They dauntlessly unfurled :
Their own great hearts—their lady's love—
These were the Poets' world !
Star of my soul ! In modern times,
If I awake my humbler rhymes :
And echo o'er the peaceful plains,
My free— my honest-hearted strains :
It is not that the jabbering crowd,
That talks so falsely and so loud,
Is pleasing music to mine ear,

Or that its highest praise is dear,
Ah no! for these, my simple lays,
I ask no patron—court no praise.
I only sing because I feel,
Things that my soul cannot conceal—
I sing because I know *thine* eye,
At least, will love my poesy.
For when alone—oppressed with care,
I lay, self-torturing, in despair:
And looked upon my future track,
And found the prospect scowling black:
When a dark lot my heart deplored,
And round the surging tempest roared:
'Twas thou, who dawned in holy light
And scattered all my spirit's night;
And floating on thy golden wings,
Awoke my soul to happier things—
And still in the blue-heaven afar,
Beams't bright and fair—my morning Star!
Now when—gay Fancies wayward child—
At times I sing a measure wild;
Thy silver tones so sweet and clear,
Are all the praise I care to hear!
So, dearest, listen to my song,
And if at times the notes appear,
Too deep—empassioned and too strong,
For shadowy heroine to hear,
O, let thy thought at such time be,
“ When thus he sang—he thought of me!”

CANTO I.

CANTO I.

I.

O, what poet may tell and what verse may reveal
The beauty and splendour of lovely Castile ;
Where the sun shines for ever in glory so bright,
That with his clear lustre he dazzles the sight,
As he plays with the mountains or sports with the stream,
Or wantons with casements that fling back his beam :
While the green earth rejoicing basks fair in his shine,
As he browns the wide cornfields and ripens the vine.
'Tis there in the moonlight, when labor no more
Awakens the hamlet with clatter and roar,
By the vault of the streamlet, deep, deep in the vale,
May ye list to the notes of the sweet nightingale,
Who constant for ever, though late be the hour,
Pours his melody forth to his own beloved flower :
Who reposing in silence and curtained in leaves,
With odours proclaims that his song she receives.
While from heaven's deep azure, refulgent and far,
Smiles down o'er the valley each glittering star.

Tis there o'er the lattice all lavishly growing,
Down-bending with fruit the sweet vine is displayed,
As it mounts the high trellise, in mercy bestowing,
On man as on nature, refreshment, and shade.
O, lovely alike on the mountain and plain—
'Tis the pride of all nations—the garden of Spain!

II.

If toil-worn and jaded a man would depart
From the glare of the court or the noise of the mart :
If gluttled with riches or sated with praise,
He long for more tranquil—more peaceable days :
If close round his heart some deep motive lie curled,
That bids him go forth from the busier world ;
To this happy region in joy let him come,
And choose mid its vallies a vine-covered home.
With the mountains piled round him—above the blue sky
His troubles shall vanish—his sorrow shall fly.
And around him and nigh him sweet joys shall increase,
His life shall fly calmly—his end shall be peace !

III.

But though 'tis radiant all the year,
More lovely doth each vale appear,
When in the autumn's mellow time,
Kind nature heightened to her prime,

Decks hill and valley—grove and plain,
With bursting fruit and golden grain.
Ah ! merry then the harvest ceased—
Awakes the gleesome vintage feast,
When youths from all their labors free,
Dance blithely 'neath the cork-tree shades,
Whose branches amorous, smile to see,
The beautiful Castilian maids.

For when the trees, that, erst so proud,
No more with clustering fruit are bowed :
When in the vats the grapes no more
In sanguine rivers flood the floor.
And all the berries from the vine,
Have blushed themselves to crimson wine :
The swains resign themselves to mirth,
And banish thought on passing things :
The peasant marks the lightened earth,
And wakes the dance or gladly sings.

IV.

'Tis evening—over glen and bower,
The bell deep booming from the tower,
Proclaims the setting sun—
And when the day-god wanes his power,
And calms his fire at evening's hour,
The festival's begun.

So now from deep embosoming vales,
Forth issuing from unnumbered dales,
With many a hard-won gaud bedight,
Long hoarded for that festal night;
With heart than summer breeze more light,
The joyous crowds on wings of love,
Are hastening to the orange grove.

V.

The ring is formed—the dance is set,
And in her place each maiden stands—
Their locks are sable—eyes are jet,
And O, a lovelier band as yet,
Has ne'er been seen on earthly land.
Like the fall of hidden waters,
Softly sweet their accents flow;
Sure they be some fairy's daughters,
With their dark eyes like the sloe.
See—their faces smile serenely,
With a sweet enchanting glow,
Mark—their actions high and queenly,
As they trip it to and fro.
Could some rapt slumberer, calmly sleeping,
In his cold and joyless home,
His senses in oblivion steeping,
In his slumber hither roam—
Be placed upon this verdant mountain

Near the ever rippling fountain,
And then he wakened from his trance
To gaze with a bewildered glance,
On those young maidens as they dance.
O, he would dream a dream more deep
Than ever was conceived in sleep ;
He'd dream that he had passed away —
Had parted from his earthly clay,
And that, where never tempests roll,
Or crashing thunders shake the pole,
His joyous and transported soul
Had roamed all — all his crimes forgiven,
And joined its kindred sprites in heaven,
For each fair nymph would seem to him
As pure and holy seraphim :
And when the truth flashed clear and plain,
Would he not wish to dream again ?

VI.

But who is she — that skimming light,
Like clouds on tranquil summer night,
Irradiate in beauty bright,
Out darts upon the ravished sight,
And chains the fettered gaze ?
Though some may stately be and tall,
And most what bard would lovely call ;
Yet must they humbly each and all,

Retire their claim and prostrate fall,
 Before her beauty's blaze !
O, hast thou dreamed in sleep so cheery,
When nought on any hand seemed dreary,
Of heavenly sprite or eastern peri ?
Or hast thou fashioned to thyself,
The figure of some fairy elf,
Decked her with every fancied grace,
Made beautiful her form and face ?
Then, even then, scarce could'st thou guess
A portion of her loveliness,
The Paphian Queen — the gayest flower
That ever charmed an amorous hour ;
The proudest nymph of mortal bower,
That ever erring man beguiled,
Must shrink before De Castro's child.

VII.

O lovely Inez ! peasant born —
 Though from thy lowly, humble birth,
The great may look on thee with scorn :
 There lives not one upon this earth,
Be she Hidalgo — slave or free —
Can match in loveliness with thee.
No ! not e'en that transcendant throng,
 The wanton beauties of proud Spain,

Who, scent exhaling, rove along,
Through the Alhambra's gorgeous fane.

VIII.

There leans a man beneath yon oak,
His form is shrouded in a cloak ;
A plume floats gaily from his crest,
His arms are folded on his breast ;
And his huge beaver hides I trow,
A noble and a manly brow.
His eye is dark, and black his garb,
And sable his impatient barb.
But what his title — what his name —
How hither to the feast he came,
Or for what purpose — by what way
Why stands he there — none here can say
His dress is noble, and his mien
Is haught and dignified I ween.
So if he do not these belie,
Yon stranger comes of lineage high.

IX.

He gazes with an earnest stare,
Upon the peasants as they dance ;
And not one of the band that dare,
Unquailing meet the fiery glare,
That glistens from his burning glance.

Yet though he gazes on them all,
There moves one form whose every measure,
He marks with an ecstatic pleasure.
And when her comrades her call,
He seems the listening sense to strain,
If haply he her name might gain.
When in far distance she is seen,
Or in the merry game advances—
Through all her circles o'er the green,
He follows her with speaking glances.
Such glances as when death comes on,
Gleam from a man whose speech is gone ;
And at the setting of his life,
Beholds a wild, half-frantic wife,
And strives the power of death to quell,
To burst its bands and cry farewell.
But finds his struggle all in vain,
On earth he ne'er must speak again.
Then—as the stiff'ning members die,
Mark ye the language of the eye :
It tells in one short second's ray,
More than ten years of words could say.
So with an oratoric glare,
The stranger gazes on the fair.

X.

And Inez marked the lustrous eye,
(For she it was on whom he gazed)

And ever as she passed him by
All modestly her eyes she raised,
And met such a soul searching ray
Spell-bound she scarce could turn away :
The fascination of that glance,
Enwrapped her in delicious trance.
So overcoming and so deep,
She dances as a maid asleep.
'Till bolder grown her glowing heart,
Would fain *its* story too impart :
And as the stranger's dark eyes turn,
Her's timidly reply—
She strives by gazing to return,
The language of his eye.
And cannot glances warmly speak,
And cannot eyes declare ?
The secret of the glowing cheek,
Of throbbing pulse and gentle sigh—
The inmost bosoms secrecy,
And all that blooms unwrecked of there !
O yes !—The proud tongue quails when'ere
The eloquent eye to speak begins—
It soars all rhetoric above,
For looking is the tongue of love.
And many a heart a bright eye wins !

XI.

The dance is o'er — the music ceases —
Beneath the cork tree's bowery shades,

The game speed on and mirth increases,
Loud shout the youths and smile the maids,
Some chant an ave — some old stories
Of mystic realms remote and far :
Others tell the wondrous glories,
Of the Roncevalle's war.
Lays of love and tales of fear —
Such as charm the festal ear.
Not one solemn face is found,
Loud the merry laugh goes round.

XII.

But where is Inez ? Far from these,
Reclining 'neath o'er arching trees,
Gazing on the little ^e streamlet,
That toys upon the babbling streamlet.
Unheedful of the night dew's power,
She sits a lovely forest flower ;
Nor marking that the breeze so chill
Cold whistles over dale and hill.
Her grief-defying mind has caught
The influence of deep-brooding thought :
And so she sits, although 'tis late,
And strives to read her coming fate —
If she may chance a glimpse discern
Of what her spirit pines to learn.

XIII.

Whence rose yon shriek — so loudly shrill,
That seemed the very air to thrill,
To rend the brain — the blood to chill ?
Whence rose yon shriek ? — The minstrels ceased,
And hushed the clamour of the feast ;
O, has some maid been snatched away,
And siezed — a furious monster's prey,
By the fierce wolves that nightly prowl,—
It might be — but they heard no howl.
So, when they turned with anxious care,
To note their group if all were there —
They found — a shudder shook each one —
Inez — the peerless — she — was gone !
Then wild and wide the echo flew,
To heaven arose a shrill halloo.
As on they rushed in eager haste,
Searching the caverns, as they passed —
In race impetuously fast —
On — on, 'till where by autumn browned,
Upon the hill the forest frowned :
They gained the entrance to the wood —
Fiercer uprose their loud alarms —
For there the sable stranger stood,
And Inez — lifeless in his arms.

XIV.

To the reverberating sky
A vengeful roar flew dismally :
“ Inez is dead ” — “ Revenge her death, ”
“ Blood—blood for blood—and breath for breath. ”
They rushed upon the stranger — he
Smiled on their noise disdainfully —
But when their glittering swords they drew,
And brandished high the shining blade —
He stepped him back and from him threw,
The garment that his form arrayed —
And to their dazzled sight displayed,
A sparkling gem-bespangled vest,
With knighthoods stars upon his breast :
Firm was his voice — he waved his hand,
And spoke as one who dared command.
“ Back, villains, back — behold in me,
Th’ inheritor of royalty !
Calm all this frenzy — cease this strife —
For pardon and for mercy call —
Nor dare to strike one blow — for I
Am Pedro, Prince of Portugal !
And this poor maiden in whose name,
Your clamour rends the peaceful vale :
Is living and as free from shame —
As pure and taintless in her fame —
As she is free from scathe or bale :

Why thus she screamed and swooned away,
To ye — I cannot — shall not say —
My sword shall brave whate'er I've done,
To ye I answer not — Begone !"
Ah me ! what mighty power doth lie
In him who hath a heart to dare —
A mind to frame a bold reply —
A tongue that can such words declare —
For now — the noisy, clamorous horde,
That came in such tumultuous pack,
Cringed them before a valiant word,
At *one* man's bidding *all* drew back.

XVI.

Why should I tell — 'tis known in every land
How Pedro woo'd the maid, and won her hand :—
How Inez left her home — her friends, her all,
And fled with him to sea-washed Portugal.
These things must pass for other bards to say,
For I must wend me on my onward way.
The King Alfonso swore by God on high,
If Pedro wedded her, that she should die.
That he would rob him of his princely name,
Reverse his honors — tarnish all his fame,
And dedicate him to eternal shame !
For the proud monarch could not stoop to own
A peasant's child upon his father's throne.

XVII.

Alas, for Royalty ! — It is not free,

Be the possessor learned — good or brave,
Still must he bend to forms of courtesy,
Aye — though he sway the world—be but a slave.
He may not leave his country forth to roam,

Little poorer free-man o'er the open earth :
He cannot choose what spot may be his home ;

His will is stifled by his lofty birth.
And when some blushing maid enchants his heart,
The daughter of the vintage or the mart—
If to his home this maid as bride he'd bring,
He may not have her — Is he not — *a King !*
O keep your ermine — keep the jewelled crown,
Awake in splendour and repose on down :
Still proud and splendid be your flags unfurled,
Spread your high pomps around the trembling world.
Ye monarchs of the earth — I envy not,
The sickly tinsel of your garish lot.
Ye own *one* kingdom, seas your sway confine—
I have no acre — yet *the world* is mine !

Don Pedro did not brave his ire,
Or answer him with words of fire,
And bid defiance to his sire :
Nor did he a false recreant prove,
Renouncing her he swore to love.
In Santa Clara's hallowed fane,

— The glory of Coïmbrian lands,
An aged Bishop blest the twain,
And joined, in secresy, their hands.
In lowly state secluded there,
Through circling years the Princess dwelt,
And many a child both brave and fair,
Around her form embracing knelt,
And claimed her fond maternal cares,
The fruit of rapture — Pedro's heirs !
To the wide, busy world she seemed,
As being parted from this life,
And dark Alfonso never dreamed,
That that there she lived — Don Pedro's wife.
So time wore on — her husband dwelt,
Now at the court — now at St. Clare —
But only calm and tranquil felt,
What time he breathed Coïmbra's air.
E'en when he stood in splendour drest
When queenly dames around him moved,
He longed to fly and sink to rest,
Soft pillowed on the velvet breast,
Of the dear Idol that he loved.

XX.

O, Love ! they have sung of thee lolling in bowers,
As some bright-smiling stripling thy tale have they
told :

An innocent urchin they've decked thee with flowers,
Like a filligree trinket of beautiful gold.

(But 'tis wrong — for thy realm is more wide than the
ocean,

The hearts of all nations — these — these are thy
dower;

And wars cannonading, red-thundering emotion,

Is weakness and quiet compared to thy power.

The proudest — the wisest — who were they e'en dying,

Would smile at the terrible onset of death :

When thou, dawn'st in thy glory — vain — vain their
defying,

For philosophies' projects fly far at thy breath.

Lone, lone is the heart, and deserted the bosom.

That owns not thine empire, that feels not thy sway:

'Tis as a huge desert on which gleams no blossom,

Or as a grim night unillumed by a ray,

A sink-pool of barrenness, hate, and decay.

Thus it was — thus it is — thus for ever shall be —

Thy beautiful standard in triumph unfurled :

While the prince and the peasant — the captive — the
free —

Bow down and acknowledge thee—king of the world.

END OF CANTO I.

INEZ DE CASTRO.

CANTO II.

I.

Out-sailing in the deep serene,
With silver radiance glittering sheen,
Rides proudly forth night's virgin queen,
And gleams on tower and tree :
No sound is heard, but all is still,
In verdant dell and lofty hill
Reigns calm tranquility :
The labouring bird hath got to rest,
Close nestled in its forest nest :
No ripple moves the lake's clear breast,
In all its caves and bays :
But here and there the placid beam
Glistens upon the slumbering stream,
While bower and cot and castle seem,
To woo the gentle rays.

II.

Fair Queen of night ! I love to sit,

When all around are lock'd in sleep,
And mark thy beamlets as they flit

Inconstant thus o'er plain and steep.
Then think I — how in lustrous light,

There through dim ages hast thou been :

I ponder on each varying sight,

Of pleasure gay or black affright,

Of broken heart or glad delight,

Of druid old — of belted knight —

Of troubadour and lady bright —

Of amorous feat or valiant might,

Which done beneath the eye of night,

Thy voiceless orb has seen.

Beneath the glory of thy ray,

Greece — Carthage — Rome — in power arose —

And ground beneath their iron sway,

The realms that dared not disobey

The haughty hests of conquering foes.

O thou hast seen them rear on high,

Their gaudy banners to the sky :

Until at length in ruin great,

Down crashed the pomp of all their state ;

And crimes that stain the name of man,

Long has it been thy lot to scan,

For deeds as base as base may be,

Too base for human eye to see,
Are marked in loneliness by thee !

III.

Speak out, brave moon ! and tell a tale —
Shall rend man's heart — his cheek make pale :
Tell in a mild, yet firm complaint,

The baseness of our recreant race —
How many a man we deem as saint,

Whose shrine the tears of pilgrims' grace,
Would, could the world his fond heart see, *soul*
A monster of iniquity.

To all th' upgazing world proclaim,
The fearful words of wrath and flame —
That to our land's eternal shame,
A lifeless idol reigns the while,
As sovereign of the monarch isle —
Men cringe and fawn and own their king,
A souless and mechanic thing.
That sickly trash and maudlin cant,
Usurp the place of old romaunt.
But tell them — tho' with soul so mean,
They deem the world a mere machine,
Poison the soul's immortal health,
Before a hollow shrine of wealth —
God shall arise in vengeful might,

And far and wide in anger smite,
With fell disease and dismal blight,
And fiercely show's to septic's view,
 This fair blue sky — this whirling ball,
 Is not a mere machine at all,
But earnest — beautiful and true !

IV.

The booming clock in the castle tower,
Had gloomily toll'd the eleventh hour.
And as though defying slumber's power,
The lovely Inez sat in her bower,
Merrily weaving a silken flower.
An azure kirtle the lady graced,
A golden zone was round her waist,
Her raven tresses that hung undress'd,
The ivory shoulders oft caress'd,
Or wantoned o'er the leaning breast.
For with no slow fastidious art,
Sought she new beauties to impart,
Or deck with an elaborate care,
The face that unadorned was fair.

V.

At length she left her broidered seat.
And tripped with lightly-treading feet,

The dark oak's surface o'er :
To a small penitential cell,
Hewn from a wall, and there she fell,
Low kneeling on the floor.
Before her on the holy rood,
In agonizing torment tried :
Was he the noble and the good,
Who from his father's radiant home.
Descended through starry dome,
Made with mankind awhile his home,
And taught his laws — and grandly died !
Down at his feet young Inez knelt,
And through her frame a thrill she felt.
Who does not feel a thrill ? — The breath
Of Prayer unveils the clouded sight.
And when we truly pray, by faith,
Our God is seen enthroned in light.
Thus felt she then as kneeling there,
She strove to ^{lip} a simple prayer.
“ Father ! if wandering from Thy path,
My soul hath left the way of truth :
Awake not Thy consuming wrath,
Forgive the folly of my youth.
And O ! if loving I have thrown
Such adoration on a man,
As should be given to Thee alone.
Forgive me, if Thy mercy can,
Such deep iniquity o'erlook,

And blot from Thy recording book !
Father !” —— but here a footstep rung
On the stone pavement, and the door
With force immense was open swung,
And standing on the polished floor
In armour dight — with aspect grim,
A warrior tall with stalwart limb,
Encased in shining steel :
His brows were black — his mien was dread,
In deep sepulchral tone he said —
“ Fair Inez of Castile ! ”

VI.

At the ominous sound the lady started :
Back from her brow her hair she parted ;
Then seized she the lamp, and light and fleet,
Skimmed the bright boards with hasty feet,
And as though to discover some deep disguise,
Flashed the red light in the warrior's eyes.
The torch's splendour — the dazzling glare,
Were returned by him with a fixed stare :
Then thus spake Inez — her cheek was pale,
As though she feared some dismal tale :
Still her voice seemed firm and her eye was bright.
With a fearful and a fearless light.
“ I know thee not — what man art thou,

That with such darkly scowling brow,
That tells both villiany and pride —
Dare seek the chamber of a bride,
Which, when by husband only trod,
Is sacred as the name of God ?
If dark Alfonso's awful ire,
Has kindled into flame, the fire
Of his most foul, demoniac hate,
And thou art come to end my fate.
O not for mine — for Pedro's sake
Refrain so poor a life to take.
See here low on my knees I fall,
To thee for life I pray — I call.
All blossoming in woman's bloom,
I am too young to meet the tomb.
Too weak to undergo such doom —
So spare, O spare me — or remain,
On thy false soul a damning stain !”

VII.

“Inez de Castro ! when a child,
You wandered innocent as wild :
Through fair Castile from hour to hour,
Thyself its choicest, holiest flower ;
I saw thee in thy beauty move —
I saw thee — it was but to love —
Since that fond time, my life has been,
A dark — a deeply chequered scene —

Of passions fierce as hell — till now
Though young, the wrinkles mar my brow,
Hotly I've loved thee — through the day,
Thy figure would before me play —
Delusive, when I strove to clasp,
Its form would aye elude my grasp,
And when on high the moon uprose,
Night brought me rest — but no repose.
My fervid passion lay so deep,
Thy vision ruled me e'en in sleep.
So at that passion's restless call,
I left my country — left my all —
And dogged thy path to Portugal,
Determined or by force or guile,
To win thy love and gain a smile.
And now before thy face I wait
To tell thee of thy coming fate —
The wretch who clings with frenzied might
From some grey turret's dizzy height,
While underneath him far below,
Frown spikes and spars in ghastly row,
And feels his arm cannot sustain
Though in despair, the muscles strain.
The traveller who in realms of snow,
Some weary, lonesome path hath found,
And onward still persists to go,
Though avalanches crash around :—
The man who on the dreary sea,

Although he strive to clear his mote,
No friendly, bordering shore can see,
As creaks in weak decay the boat.
Wretched, despairing though these be,
Lady! they are but types of thee.
For did I give one sign — one shout —
Know there are those who wait without,
Prepared with poignard or with knife;
To end the tragedy of life.
Commissioned by the king they come,
To send thee to another home.
One way alone in all this strife,
Remains for thee to keep that life.
Fly with me now — and be my wife!
Vain, more elaborate harangues.
Thy fate on thy decision hangs!"

VIII.

"Monster! — dream not I feared to die:
Call in thy murderers, and I
Will meet their steel right dauntlessly.
But to commit an act of shame,
To blast my virtue — soil my name —
'Fly with *thee* now — and be thy wife,'
And only to preserve my life:
It goads me that a man should live
Who *dare* so foul an insult give.

Know there's a marriage far above,
The rites that by the church are given—
'Tis when two *souls* are bound by love,
And that alliance blest by heaven.
Their forms alone proud man can part
He cannot disunite the heart.
So, let my funeral couch be spread;
I'll wend me to my home above—
Better that Pedro find me dead,
Than find me faithless to his love!
Then in one word, I will not fly—
I have decided—let me *die*!”

IX.

“One minute, listen—for I say,
Pedro from earth has passed away:
The king divorced him from his wife—
And death divorced him from his life!”
(The wretch foresaw while Pedro lived,
Inez would never be his bride—
And thus—alas, he was believed—
The blackened miscreant lied.)
“Now in one word—again declare,
If thou the sun—the sky—the air—
And all that's lovely wilt forego—
Say, wilt thou live?” She answered, “No.”

X.

Up rose the warrior at that word,
And swiftly drew his sheeny sword:
And hotly paced the groaning floor.
And thrice he smote the oaken door.
Scarce had the vaulted echoes rung,
E'er wide the creaking portal sprung,
And in three titled miscreants rushed,
Their cheeks with sanguine thirst were flushed —
Little deemed they of shame or guilt,
They fattened on the blood they spilt.

XI.

The lady rose as in they came,
And closer drew her broidered vest:
As a hot fire of rage and shame,
Suffused her cheek with tingling flame,
Boiled in her veins and throbbed her breast.
Her soul seemed touched with holy glow,
As soaring from this earth below,
It heavenward winged its flight:
And to the mail-clad ruffian's eyes,
Towering aloft she seemed to rise
Above her common height.
They trembled as they marked her stand
Prepared — terrifically grand!

XII.

“ While on this world of pain — of strife,
Something there was worth craving life,
I sued for mercy — that is o’er,
And now I ask my life no more. * —
If now one wish pervade my breast,
It is to die — and sink to rest.
The earth is green — the sky is fair,
And pleasant is the summer air,

And all unto my heart *were* dear :
But wanting one thing — I despair,
For earthly joys no longer care,
No longer sigh to linger here.

High o’er me in the heaven afar,

Angelic forms before me play :
My love shines there — a glittering star,

And soft he whispers — “ Come away !
From earth and all its follies flee,
To roam in happier spheres with me ! ”
Ah, sweet my lord ! to thee I go,
Without thee earth I now mislike : — ”
She bared her bosom to the blow,

Then cried — “ Lo ! I am ready — Strike ! ”

XIII.

Awhile they paused — as though dismayed,
Or of her holiness afraid,

Trembling they stood — not one essayed
To touch or draw his ready blade : —
So much could virtue's taintless force
Restrain awhile their reckless course.
But soon their leader, he who first
Intrusive on her prayer had burst —
His poignard drew — shining and bare —
He waved it wildly in the air,

Then plunged it to its fleshy home :
And as it pierced the beating heart,
Inez received it with a start :
Then slightly screamed — and then at length,
As though with superhuman strength,
She raised her hands to heaven — and sighed,
While poured the blood in crimson tide,

“ Pedro — my love — I come — — I — come ”
Then all her former vigor o'er,
Down — down she fell to rise no more :

While the assassin gazed upon

The hideous deed his hand had done :
And stood the ghastly corpse before,
His feet bedabbed with the gore ;
That trickled on the oaken floor !

XIV.

There is a grief that loudly cries,
In bursting sobs and dismal sighs :

The sorrowing look — the downcast air,
Give token of a fix'd despair,
But like a summer's fleeting shower,
Time saps that woe's decaying power,
And when a few sad weeks of pain
Are o'er, the heart revives again ;
But the most firmly-rooted grief,
To which nought here *can* bring relief,
Is when without a single, sigh,
With voice unbroken — tearless eye —
We see our dearest treasure die :
Behold our happiest joys decay,
And all we cherish pass away :
Then though we know life must be dear,
That nothing can the future cheer,
Break forth no sigh, and shed no tear.

XV.

So calm and still, was Pedro's sorrow,
Hating to-day — dreading to-morrow.
Embedded in a sea of woe,
He cared not for the ebb and flow
Of the revolving fates below.
Like a fair column that doth stand
With ruin stretched on every hand ;
Whose shadow far and wide is shed
O'er some lone city of the dead,

So, bound by a life-freezing spell,
As mute and as immoveable,
Stood Pedro o'er the clay-cold form
Of her who once with love was warm.
No sound escaped his lips — no groan
Was there to wake its doleful tone :
And her dark eyes now glassy glare,
Gave nothing save a vacant stare.
He saw her laid within the tomb,
The requiem dirge in silence heard —
E'en then he did not rend the gloom,
That sealed his bosom — not one word
Of all the darksome thoughts he nurst,
From his o'erladen bosom burst.

XVI.

When all was o'er, and life from him,
Was dreary, desolate and dim ;
When every beaming glance he met,
But told him that *his* sun had set :
He left the court and wandered far,
O'er hill and valley — grove and plain —
He passed his country's frontier bar,
And trod the ground of bordering Spain.
He heard the fairy music fall,
In the Alhambra's magic hall : —
He saw the maiden's dance at eve.

In fair Montserrat's olive groves :
He saw the happy peasants' leave
Their toil and haste to join their loves.
He heard them trill their lusty strains,
All blithely o'er the echoing plains ;
But never could he hull to rest,
The hidden demon of his breast.

XVII.

He wandered by thy echoing shore,
Thou sea ! whose everlasting roar,
Through the long centuries has been hurled,
Round the great empires of the world.
He saw the high tremendous dome,
That towers above majestic Rome ;
Beheld the hissing flames aspire
From lofty Etna's mount of fire.
Saw the high huge citadel upon
The relics of the Parthenon :
And sailed upon the smiling seas
That ripple round the Cyclades.
To holy land his feet were led,
Where David ruled and Jesus bled.
But though he wandered o'er the earth,
By mountains' rise and rivers' fall :
And listened to the notes of mirth :
Still in a dark array arose

The memory of former woes,
One thought alone was firm and deep,
He wished for one long soothing sleep ;
A sleep that should reposeful last —
And wake oblivions of the past,
And so — forget it all !

END OF CANTO II.

CANTO III.

INEZ DE CASTRO.

CANTO III.

I.

In the streets of sunny Santarem,
There are men in armour dight :
And ladies fair, whose jewels rare,
Flash in the sunbeam's light.
And budding maids whose smiles let fall
On many a gallant knight.
There are standards floating gaily
Upon the turret's height :
And many a proud triumphal arch
Towers gaudy to the sky :
And to and fro the rabble
Run giddily, and sing —
“ God save the gallant Pedro —
God save our noble king ! ”

II.

Alfonso in the sepulchre,
Well nigh three months hath lain :
And Pedro from his wanderings
Hath turned him home again.
He has flung his sorrow from him,
And smiles bedeck his brow :
And if these signs belie him not,
O, he is happy now !
Glad seems the earth — all, all is mirth —
And loud the people sing —
“ God save the gallant Pedro —
God save our noble king ! ”

III.

In the square of Sant' Iago,
There's a scaffold hung in black :
Upon it frowns the dismal block,
And behind it is the rack :
And near is shewn the monarch's throne,
All splendid and begilt :
'That the king may note the stroke, and see
The murderers' life-blood spilt :
For 'twas Pedro swore a solemn oath,
By the God of the glorious sky,
That the murderers of his Inez

Should fall before his eye :
By the God of Heaven he swore it,
That the murderers all should die !

IV.

Now at St. Francis' Palace,
Disrobed, the victims wait :
While within the regal chamber,
Don Pedro sits in state.
There are beauties crowding round him,
And warriors bend the knee,
The pride of proud Lisboa,
The Lusian chivalry.
In the court are stalwart warriors,
In battle proved of old :
Young knights in costly habilments,
With their spurs of shining gold.
Upon their coursers proud they sit,
And their steeds as proud as they,
Spurn the base earth and gaily prance,
Pleased with the grand array ;
For thousands throng in concourse strong,
To join the ranks to-day.

V.

Now from the hall the king hath come
To mount his waiting steed :

To bid the heralds sound the trump,
And the gay procession lead.
Behold — he's mounted — to the crowd,
Thrice has his plumed head been bowed —
Hear — how the people sing —
“ God save the gallant Pedro —
God save our noble king ! ”

VI.

He gives the sign — and forward go,
All bristling close in war-like row,
The warrior's mail-clad band :
Then follow, decked with pompous show,
In chariots fair and grand,
Those whom too well the people know —
The nobles of the land.
The next two portly heralds ride —
Then come young knights so proud —
Who as they move in hasty tide,
In open bounty far and wide,
Fling largess to the crowd.
Next are the guards of Pedro,
With Music at their head :
High o'er the scene their lances glow,
Their banners all are spread.
Their gilded casques are burnished bright —
Their armour glitters in the light.

VII.

Now in the regal chariot comes,
('Mid noise of trumpet and of drums,
And cannons' boisterous roar :
While from the vast, applausive crowd,
In torrent blustering and loud,
Hoarse acclamations pour,)
He before whom all Lusians fall —
Don Pedro — king of Portugal !
Then guarded by attending forces,
Bound tightly on two jaded horses,
Deeply and dreadly cursed :
The assassins of the monarch's love,
In grim death-sadness onward move :
Their features speak their humbled pride,
Behind their backs their shields are tied,
Which ye may see as on they ride,
Dishonoured and reversed,
Their backs are to the horses' head,
Their faces to the tail :
Their matted hair so wildly spread,
Floats streaming to the gale.
Around them wakes a savage roar,
Like billows tumbling on the shore :
Curses ascend — the death-bells boom,
O, sad their passage to the tomb !

VIII.

Onward they go — through street and square
The grand procession pours :
While from tall bastions high in air,
The thundering cannon roars.
Onward, still on — from street to street,
While on each lofty tower,
Fair maidens throng the train to greet,
And drop at some blest lover's feet,
A love-betokening flower.
At length they pause — and wheel around,
Their horse-hoofs clattering o'er the ground ;
And form in serried phalanx there,
Through old St. Iago's spacious square ;
In denser ranks and closer bands,
Where in the midst the scaffold stands.

IX.

Don Pedro sits upon the massive chair,
That soars abruptly o'er the living square :
His robes of state shine gaily in the sun,
Whose course to its meridian now has run.
Upon his breast he wears the numerous stars
Of various knighthoods — trophies of the wars ;
His cloak is studded with the gems that shine,
Fresh from the caverns of the jewelled mine.

Near, on the scaffold, shivering in their guilt—
Warm in that blood that shortly must be spilt,
The murderers stand — deep dread dwells on their
face —

They quail and shrink before their last disgrace :
And lack the courage to meet well the shock,
That now awaits them at the bodeful block.

As some poor outcast on the foaming sea,
Strives from the whelming torrent to be free :
But feels that no attempt avails to save,
When death is threatening in each bursting wave.
So goaded on beyond all power of thought
In body tortured and in mind distraught :
They vainly strive to pierce their mortal scope,
And see if yet remain no sign of hope.

That no hope is, too well each heart must feel,
And yet before the monarch's face they kneel :
While with a faltering voice and tearful eyes,
Alvaro Gonsalez for mercy cries. —

“O, thou who hast received — a glorious dower,
The mighty sceptre — attribute of power ;
Let not deep cruelty that power disgrace,
But give kind mercy her becoming place :
For be thy ruling upright, just, and good,
'Tis all in vain if it be stained by blood : —
Then take not that thou hast not power to give,
Smile on us sire, and bid thy servants live !”

X.

Up starts king Pedro as he heard
Each trembling tone — each suppliant word —
Forth from the shades of his dark eye ;
Triumphant flashes fleetly fly ;
Too dire in verse to be exprest,
They thrilled through each poor suppliant's breast,
And back they shrunk — despairing — lorn —
As curled his lip in withering scorn :

“ The mercy the wild lion shews,
 When in his grasp he holds his prey
When opening jaws his fangs disclose,
 Whitened, all ready for the fray :
Though on your knees ye beg — ye pray,
That mercy shall be yours to-day !

The mercy that Satanic sprite
 Shews when with talons sharp and fell,
He grasps some new-departed wight,
 And drags him shrieking down to hell ;
Though eloquently ye may pray,
That mercy shall be yours to day !

The mercy ye yourselves have shown —
 The mercy, ye foul miscreants felt ;
When, in the house of Tears alone,

The unoffending Inez knelt,
And vainly for one hour did pray —
That mercy shall be yours to day !

Shall *I* not have *my* vengeance now ?

Shall I not take your guilty life ?

Shall I forget my solemn vow,

Now — when its consumation's rife ?

No ! — Justice and vengeance *shall* be given. —

For I *will* have it — aye, by Heaven !

The meanest vassal in my land,

Did some one but *insult* his wife :

Would swiftly seize a powerful brand,

And take revenge — by taking life.

And shall not I — king Pedro — find

Vengeance, as well as low born hind ?

'Tis known, blood unavenged cries out :

Be it on carpet, sea, or sod,

It gives for aye a mourning shout,

Appealing from mankind to God ;

And woe to him who knows 'tis shed,

And seeks not to avenge the dead !

Within the baleful house of tears,

A spirit wanders through the gloom :

There has it roved for many years,

Misliking much its bloody tomb.
And loud it cries with awful breath,
Pedro — my lord — revenge my death !
Then miscreants cease your prayers to me,
For I am firm as Calpe's rock,
Which yields not to the raging sea,
So then prepare ye for the block !
Headsmen, your axes brandish high :—
If they be fit to live — they are to die !”

XI.

Up from their knees the twain arise,
And give unto the azure skies,
One lingering look — it is their last ;
For now the guards have veiled their eyes,
And sight and well nigh life are past.
Together on the blocks are bare,
Their necks, and gleaming in the air,
(By the stern headsman's look ye know)
The axe is ready for the blow —
Right well and true the stroke is given,
Each body from its soul is riven :
And the deep crimson torrents pour
Out gushing on the ensanguined floor :
Each head in its own life-blood rolls, —
May God have mercy on their souls !

XII.

In Santa Clara's gorgeous shrine,
(Where rest the images divine
Of many a saint who humbly trod,
In self denial to his God,)
Are banners upon, banners hung,
The sculptur'd ornaments among :
The escutcheons of each mighty chief,
Droop from the walls in fair relief :
And though it is the broad daylight,
Thousands of lamps are blazing bright.
Dense as 'tis possible to be,
The people press, the sight to see :
E'en nobles and their ladies proud,
Are mingled in that eager crowd.
High from the quire's exalted dwelling,
The holy notes to heaven are swelling.
The boys with censors in their hands —
The priest gay-robed in garments grand —
And bishops bearing crosier high —
'Mid incense circling to the sky,
Meander round the sacred pile,
Down the huge nave and up the aisle ;
Where all the regal standards wave,
Full in the centre of the nave
King Pedro sits — in pageant great,
Bedecked with coronation state :

In glory of monarchal pride —
But — what is that ? — there — by his side ?

XIII.

A mouldering mass of withering bone,
Exalted on a queenly throne,
Striking deep terror through each one,
Sits, scarlet-robed, — *a skeleton !*
Upon the yellow, chapless skull,
Once with grand aspirations full,
From which a few black hairs hang down,
Is placed the queen's imperial crown.
O Christ ! it is a hideous sight ;
It chills the heart with fear and fright :
Wide grins the mouth — the nose is gone —
Green putrid flesh now clings upon
The hollow cheeks — the nails have grown,
And blackened overtop the bone.
One eye slow cankered by decay,
In its round socket rots away ;
And slowly giving way to time,
Hangs a foul ball of fleshy slime !
The other has entirely gone ;
Its spacious cell of umbered bone
Is vacant, and to view lays bare,
The brain, with all that festers there ;
The legs are green, and brown, and red,

Each color is diversely spread ;
Some parts yet fresh, but now begin
To drop the covering of the skin ;
While some have shed it all, and shew
The muscles as they played below :
The hideous whole seems but to be
A satire on humanity.
And can ye in this picture trace
The relics of a radiant face ?
Does this decaying mass reveal
The peerless daughter of Castile ?

XIV.

Great God ! Say — can it be !
And is this *all* that now remains
Of her who danced so merrily
Beneath the widely-spreading tree,
On Castile's fragrant plains !
O, is *this* she who in St. Clare,
The young — the beautiful — the fair —
Received Don Pedro to her breast,
And lulled him to an amorous rest :
While he ecstatic marked her grace,
Her perfect form, and perfect face,
And twined her in a warm embrace !
Inflated fool — come draw ye here —
This horrid wreck of nature scan :

Gaze on this sight of truth — of fear —
And go thy ways an humble man !

XV.

Now up the aisles the nobles go,
To kiss the bony hand :
To hail the ghastly skeleton,
The mistress of the land.
The Duke of Marialva,
Don José of Douro ;
The haughtiest, proudest nobles,
Sweet Portugal doth know.
Have now before that Phantom,
Bent them in homage low.
Each when he's ta'en the bony hand,
And pressed it to his face :
Fast hastens from the glittering scene,
To mourn the dire disgrace.
Slow, one by one, they kiss the hand,
Slow, one by one, depart,
To bury deep in solitude,
The anguish of the heart.
Till the great crowd themselves disperse,
Soon are the thousands gone :
Yet lonely there, on regal chair,
King Pedro sits alone.
His head is rested on her hand,

Unmoving as in trance :
And O, what human verse may tell,
How fearful is his glance.
His brows are knit — his eyes declare,
The maddening grief he feels :
And wrung by torture from its cell,
A tear-drop slowly steals.
See from his chair he rises now —
He wipes his tear-dewed cheeks —
His hand he strokes across his brow,
And mournfully he speaks.

XVI.

“Tis o’er — all gone — alas ! not one remains,
And I am left sad, wretched, and alone —
Like some lost fiend, to howl my dismal strains,
Here to dark vault and monumental stone.
O, if these things had voices they would moan —
If tears — they’d weep for their poor monarch’s fall,
Give to me sob for sob, and groan for groan ;
In vain to things inanimate I call —
E’en *thou* to me art deaf—my love—my life—my all !

Come to me, Inez, from that other land,
Come, guardian angel ! glad this aching sight :
Leave thee the beauties of that radiant strand,
Where seraphs roam begirt with emerald light.
Come ! as thou wert on earth, in beauty bright.

Tear from me all this sorrow, care, and strife :
Now all around is madness, frenzy, night —
Then burst the tomb, and come afresh to life,
To joy this sinking heart — my beautiful — my wife !

O, do I dream — or do my senses swim ?
A cold, cold shudder creeps across my frame :
My brain grows 'wilder'd, and mine eyes are dim —
And yet my burning thoughts I cannot tame.
I am consuming in a feverish flame ;
In my rapt ear unearthly voices sing —
Spirits of woe earth's saddest offspring claim ;
And yet — I am that earth's most mighty thing —
I am a throned king — *a king* — what is a king ?

A king is fortune's fool — she lifts him high,
But in fell scorn to smite him down below :
What though he wear the sign — the majesty ;
What though he lord it with a pompous show :
If his star wane, his heritage is woe.
From *my* o'erburdened heart incessantly,
Deep wailing bursts of lamentation flow,
What boots it then — that I be placed so high —
If within all my realms none lives more sad than I !

Then bend ye heavens ! and you ye tempests rise !
Earth ! quake and open thy gigantic womb,
Heed not thy sons and daughters rending cries,
But whelm the universe in one great tomb !

Burst ye volcanoes in sulphureous fume !
Whirlwinds awake — sweep nations to the sky !
Come on, ye shades of night and endless gloom !
Grim Death send forth thy myrmidons, for I
Care not to live alone — and do not fear to die !”

XVII.

Hushed in the terror of his rage,
His torment silent sleeps :
In his hot hands he hides his face,
And loud the strong man weeps !
Unconscious on his throne he sits,
Nor wots he that the sunbeam flits,
Fast waning in the western aisle :
That darkly glooms the vaulted pile.
Insensible to dark or light,
He recks not if 'tis day or night.

XVIII.

As sunset chimes ring out, alone
A lithèr page trips o'er the stone,
To where the throne of Pedro stands :
And softly takes the monarch's hands,
Saying, in accents mild —
“ My sire ! the feast — the revelry —
Is waiting now alone for thee.

The wine foams high — the feast is set —
The music plays — the guests are met.
So deign to leave this sombre pile,
And grace the banquet with a smile !”
King Pedro rose as thus he heard,
But drew no cordial from the word ;
He only sighed, and, absent, said
“ Here — take my hand — I must be led —
My sun has set — I’m but a child ! ”

XIX.

For years he ruled the Lusian land,
All nations’ friend — his country’s trust —
Dispensing good on every hand,
He won the title of — The Just !
He raised above the warlike powers,
Those arts that charm the peaceful hours :
And pleasure grew, as faded pain
Beneath the glory of his reign.
But O, his former self had fled —
The fire of his proud temper dead :
For years on his ancestral throne,
His body sate — for heart had gone,
And peace and rest for aye were flown.
Sadly he plodded o’er life’s plain,
And ne’er awoke to joy again !

END OF CANTO III.

EPILOGUE.

TO MY FRIENDS AT H * * * * *

Pile high the fire — my task is o'er —
The story told — I sing no more —
The varying lay whose music's power,
Perchance beguiled the weary hour,
Is ended now — High mounts the blaze,
Draw, friends, your chairs in circle round —
The flickering fire's still varying rays,
Unaided of themselves illumine,
With mellow light the cheerful room,
And casting shadows through the gloom,
Upon the pictured walls around,
Our misty figures there assume,
Phantasmal forms, both sweet and drear —
The time is witching — kind and dear,
For trusty friends are sitting near.
And if they e'en will lend an ear,
A plain but warm adieu to hear ;
My harp shall then essay to tell,
In ~~the~~^{the} wailing tone, a Fare-ye-well !

O, but this life is weary — weary —
Dim and desolate and dreary :
Man issues helpless from the womb,
And plods wild-wandering to the tomb.
Now rising in his dreams to heaven,
Then through the roaring whirlpools driven :
From bliss, and love, and comfort riven,
He strives for rest that is not given.

O sad the tale — in sunny youth,
Before the world perverts his truth :
Some maiden from the realms above,
Awakes his ardent soul to love.
His hot heart glows — his spirit burns —
To poesy in transport turns,
And pants nigh maddened to reveal,
The rapturous thoughts his fancies feel.
But finds no words could ever say
How grand that fiery passion's sway —
But lo ! e'en at that passion's height,
A cloud creeps on, and all is night.
Fate lowers — the fickle joys are flown,
The mistress of his spirit gone,
And he is left to pine alone.
O life of sorrow — frenzy — gloom —
No rest for man, except the tomb !

He older grows, and tinsel fame
To gain or haply hoarded wealth —

He strives through labor — glory — shame —
To clutch some poor neasmal name,
 Barters his honor and his health.
In some deep dale secluded fair —
His castle cleaves the tranquil air :
High nods the corn within his fields,
His orchard clustering richness yields.
The moorcock crows upon his hills,
The trout leaps frisking in his rills.
Far as his eye around can see,
Of moor and mead the master he !

God speaks — there comes a thunder shock,
And blasts his castle from the rock —
His cattle die — a fearful blight
Strikes nature with destructive might —
A panic comes — his money flies —
His peace flies with it — and — he dies !
O life of sorrow — care, and gloom,
No rest for man except the tomb !

Since such our lot — how should we prize,
The glorious visions that arise,
At times to glad our wearied eyes :
How love those beings who impart,
Kind sunshine to the aching heart —
The dearest boon that mercy lends,
The chief of earthly blessings — FRIENDS !

FRIENDS ! — when that well known word I sing,
What varied memories in me spring.
Of friends now foes — of friends far fled —
Of friends now numbered with the dead —
But more than all of those with whom,
I sit within this cheery room,
And wile away the wintry time,
By chanting forth my honest rhyme.

In fair old Greece, the poets' dower,
Was deemed by men a priestly power,
And every minstrel's golden verse,
Could strongly bless or deeply curse.
If in these days such power remain,
And linger yet in poets' strain :
And I such heavenly force possess,
I'll wake it now — and waking bless !

Right trusty Friends ! If, unto ye
What I could wish to hap, were told,
Engraven on men's hearts 'twould be,
As ever prophecy of old.
I lack such power — a feeble lay
Must stand for all I fain would say.
As time speeds on and years roll by,
May joy still stand attendant nigh,
To check the sad-soul rending cry,
To wipe the tear-drop from the eye,

To scatter sunshine o'er the sky,
And make grim care before ye fly,
And smooth your death-couch when ye die
Far be that hour when ye must part,
Kind spirits of the open heart !
Whate'er is sweetest — brightest — best —
Reign ever in each noble breast ;
No cloud come nigh to mar its rest —
But live — long live — supremely blest !

L'ENVOI.

To those who scarce vouchsafed a look,
But e'er ten pages closed the book —
And with full many muttered curses,
Of "Stuff" and "Rubbish" scorned my verses,
 Aud turned them in disgust away :—
Nor scrupled to the world to show it,
 To each and all of *such* I say —
"*God send you soon a better Poet!*"

To those who, nerved by purpose deep,
Read labouring on, defying sleep ;
And plodded through the tedious lay,
Companions of my own wild way :
Nor turned them once in scorn away.
To each and all of *such* I say
 "*A reading is a valiant deed !*
 "*A reading is the bards' best meed !*
 "*Thus are ye friends and friends indeed !*"

And now one task alone remains,
To close at once these rambling strains :

My harp is hushed — my task is done —
Some goal, or good or bad, I've won —
As life's dull road we travel on —
Heaven shield us all and every one !

THE END.

(Perhaps it may only be right to state that History has been very much departed from in this Poem. He who would have a correct knowledge of the story, would do well to consult some history, and not be guided by this !)

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